

February 10, 2016

**Testimony for the Connecticut General Assembly
Higher Education Subcommittee of the Appropriations Committee**

Dr. Shelly M. Jones, Associate Professor, Central Connecticut State University

Dear Members of the Appropriations and Higher Education Committees:

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak with you this evening. My name is Shelly Jones and I am an Associate Professor in the Department of Mathematical Sciences at Central Connecticut State University. I am a lifelong resident of Connecticut, growing up in Bridgeport, teaching in Bridgeport Public Schools and now living in Hamden with my two daughters, one of which is a student at CCSU. I can tell you that as a parent I am very concerned about my daughter earning a college degree because it is very difficult to get a job with a high school diploma. I know that many parents have that same concern.

Over the last ten years I've been proud to educate undergraduate CCSU students in mathematics education. Most of these students become elementary school teachers right here in Connecticut. Most of my students are from Connecticut and stay in Connecticut. In my role as a mathematics education professor, I also supervise middle school and high school student teachers as well as teach graduate level courses for practicing teachers around the state. This is important work in this day of testing and accountability. Our school-age students deserve the best education and I believe that our CSU system graduates some of the best teachers in the nation. The work I do at CCSU contributes to the state by preparing beginning teachers and providing advanced preparation to practicing teachers.

I want to end by telling you a story about the human side of the inequality and crisis of public higher education. Earlier today at CCSU we hosted a summit on this very issue. We had four panel sessions that were webexed to all four CSU campuses. One panelist told the story of two students, an African American male and a Latina female. Both these students had to leave college because of the lack of funding their families had to continue. Another panelist informed us about the fact that African American students are twice as likely to borrow and we borrow twice as much. So when you hear of these stories, and there are many more, we see that rising college costs has become a barrier to college attainment. Families and students pay about half the cost of a college degree and the average student debt load in Connecticut is \$30,191.¹

My recommendation is for an increase in state support for higher education. This increase will ensure access to more students to obtain higher education in Connecticut. Thank you for your time.

¹ Young Invincibles. (January 2016). 2016 State Report Cards. Student Impact Project. Retrieved 2-9-16 from <http://younginvincibles.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/YI-State-Report-Cards-2016.pdf>.